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## An examination regarding methods of support for children who stutter in cooperation with self-help groups in Japan

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### Abstract

This study examined by the questionnaires how the members of self-help groups for people who stutter in Japan (Stutterers' Self-Help Groups: SSHG), school teachers of resource rooms for speech and language disorders (teachers), and speech-language-hearing therapists (therapists) cooperate to support children who stutter and their parents in Japan. 67 teachers and therapists involved in the support for people who stutter in Kyushu, and also 91 SSHG members were attended to the questionnaires. As these results, the most troubles and difficulties in supporting children who stutter for teachers and therapists were "mastery and choice of treatment methods" and "responding to psychological matters". Their troubles and difficulties varied according to their length of experience. Regarding the teachers and therapists interest in the activities, "lecture of stuttering", "subscription for the newsletter", "introduction of booklets and teaching materials", "telling experiences" had a higher response rate. It may be possible to contribute to the support through mainly providing information in the locations without SSHG. Regarding the matters and issues that may be useful in supporting children who stutter in collaboration with SSHG, the trend of answers were similar between the teachers/therapists and the members. Regarding the degree of passion for supporting stuttering children that the members of SSHG have, they responded "have (46.2%)", "have a little (30.8%)", and this shows the members of SSHG are highly motivated to support children who stutter. Also SSHG members' various backgrounds and experiences might be useful in support.

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**Keywords:** Children Who Stutter, Methods of Support, Stutterers' Self-Help Groups, Teachers of Resource Rooms for Speech and Language Disorders, Speech-Language-Hearing Therapists

### Introduction

In Japan, extensive support is provided to children who stutter keeping in mind the collaboration with self-help

groups of people who stutter (hereinafter referred to as SSHG) and persons in-charge of supporting students who stutter [teachers responsible for guidance in resource rooms of speech and language disorders (hereinafter referred to as teachers), speech-language-hearing therapists (hereinafter referred to as therapists)].

#### 〈Stutterers' Self-Help Groups in Japan〉

Self-help groups for stuttering play an important role in solving the problem of stuttering in Japan. The “Japan Stuttering Association” (Genyu-kai) was founded in 1966 in Tokyo. Afterward, local Genyu-kai were established in various regions. Currently, 34 regions in Japan are represented by Genyu-kai.

Genyu-kai and the “Japan Stuttering Project” (established in 1994, the activity around Osaka) are the two biggest stuttering self-help groups in Japan now. Some therapists as well as teachers of speech and language disorders and stuttering researchers attend meetings on a regular basis and sometimes offer participants their own special knowledge about stuttering.

Interaction with the members is not only face-to-face but also occurs through e-mail. The main purpose of the groups is to help members live as well as possible with their stuttering rather than offer promises of complete recovery. The groups are making efforts to support junior high school students and high school students who stutter. This is especially important because many are not receiving regular treatment. (Kenjo, 2005)

With regard to the ideal way of supporting children who stutter by collaborating with teachers of regular classroom of speech and language disorder and SSHG, Fujishima et al (2000) conducted a questionnaire survey on the teachers. As results, they reported that both the parties have not reached to the stage where they can collaborate and solve the problems.

With regard to imparting special needs education and preparing individual education support plan, it is desired that there is collaboration with related institutions of medical, welfare, labor, NPO organization, parents' committee, and university (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003; others).

With regard to creating individual education support plan for children who stutter, Matsumura et al (2005) has mentioned about participation in the activities of SSHG such as camps.

Fujiwara (2009) has reported the benefits of collaborating with SSHG young members while providing group teaching in the regular classrooms. It can be said that collaboration and exchange with SSHG is useful for providing support considering the future of children.

In the present study, we conducted a questionnaire survey to examine the ideal way of support children who stutter and their parents through collaboration between teachers/therapists in charge of stuttering guidance and SSHG.

## Methods

### 1. Study subjects

A) 67 teachers and therapists engaged in supporting stuttering in Kyushu (5 subjects were in 20s, 9 subjects were in 30s, 18 subjects were in 40s, 35 subjects were in 50s; 16 persons had less than 4 years of professional work experience, 25 persons had 4 to less than 11 years of experience, 26 persons had experience of 11 years or more; 49 persons had SSHG in their regions, 18 persons had no SSHG; there were 48 teachers, 13 therapists, and 6 other persons).

B) 91 adult persons who stutter, mostly members of SSHG in Kyushu, Chugoku and Shikoku regions (73 males, 18 females; 13 subjects were in 20s, 15 subjects were in 30s, 18 subjects were in 40s, 30 subjects were in 50s, and 15 subjects were 60 years and above).

## 2. Survey contents

We administered two types of questionnaires, namely, questionnaire for teachers/therapists and SSHG members.

A) Questionnaire [Selection response system (multiple answers allowed)] for teachers and therapists:

a) Difficulties and hardships in supporting children who stutter, b) Status of participation and interests in the activities of SSHG, c) Usefulness of support to children who stutter in the activities of SSHG, issues, etc.

B) Questionnaire for SSHG members:

Items b) and c) from the questionnaire for teachers and therapists, level of motivation and reasons for supporting children who stutter, etc.

## 3. Methods of analysis

1) With regard to the teachers and therapists, relation with the answers to the number of years of working experience as specialist personnel and region (presence of SSHG in the region of employment),

2) With regard to SSHG members, we conducted analysis about relation with age, gender, number of years after joining SSHG, type of job, severity of stuttering, and level of motivation to support children who stutter.

## Results and discussion

### 1. Difficulties and hardships faced by the teachers and therapists while supporting children who stutter

As difficulties and hardships faced while supporting children who stutter, response rate was high for “Mastery of guidance methods (53.7%)”, “Selection of guidance methods (52.2%)”, and “Psychological support (46.3%)” (Fig.1.).

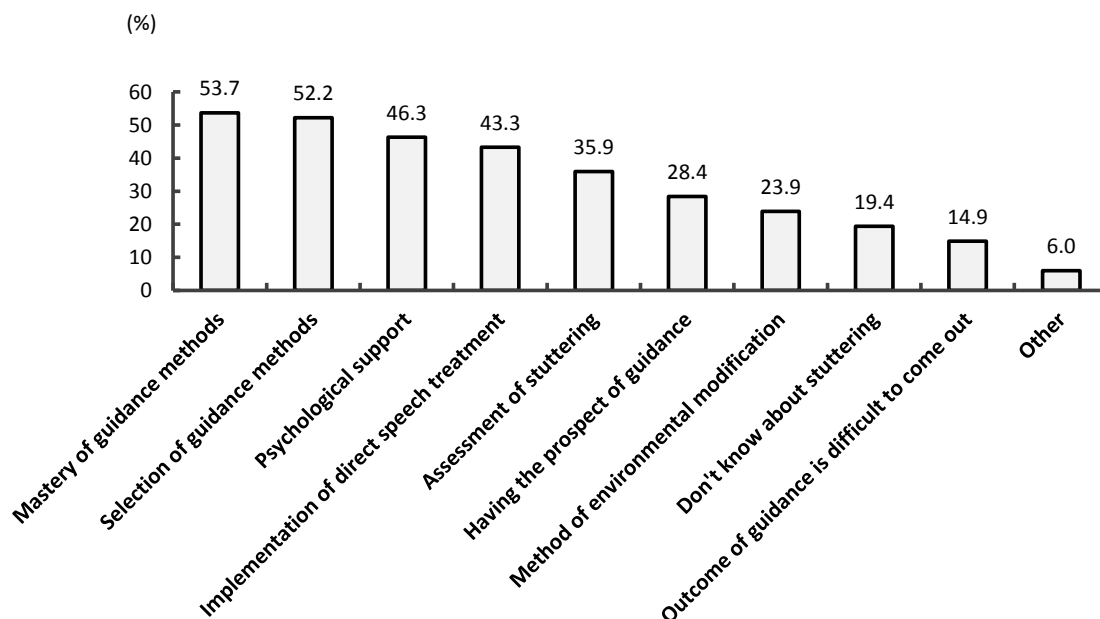


Fig.1. Difficulties and hardships faced by the teachers and therapists while supporting children who stutter (n=67)

If we looked at the responses by the number of years of employment, differences were seen in the responses in terms of “Psychological support (56.3% under 3 years, 56.0% between 4 and 11 years, and 30.8% for 11 years and above)”, “Method of environmental modification (37.5% under 3 years, 32.0% between 4 and 11 years, and 7.7% for 11 years and above)”, and “Implementation of direct speech treatment (31.3% under 3 years, 48.0% between 4 and 11 years, and 46.2% for 11 years and above)”. From these, it came to light that difficulties and hardships differ the length of experience as the specialist personnel. None of the therapists selected “Don’t know about stuttering” in their responses.

## 2. Status of participation and interest in the activities of SSHG

- (1) Participation of the teachers and therapists in the activities of SSHG: Response rate was high in terms of “Lecture of stuttering (32.8%)”, “Viewing and reading the newsletters (26.9%)”, “Introduction/providing of booklets/educational materials (22.4%)” (Fig.2).

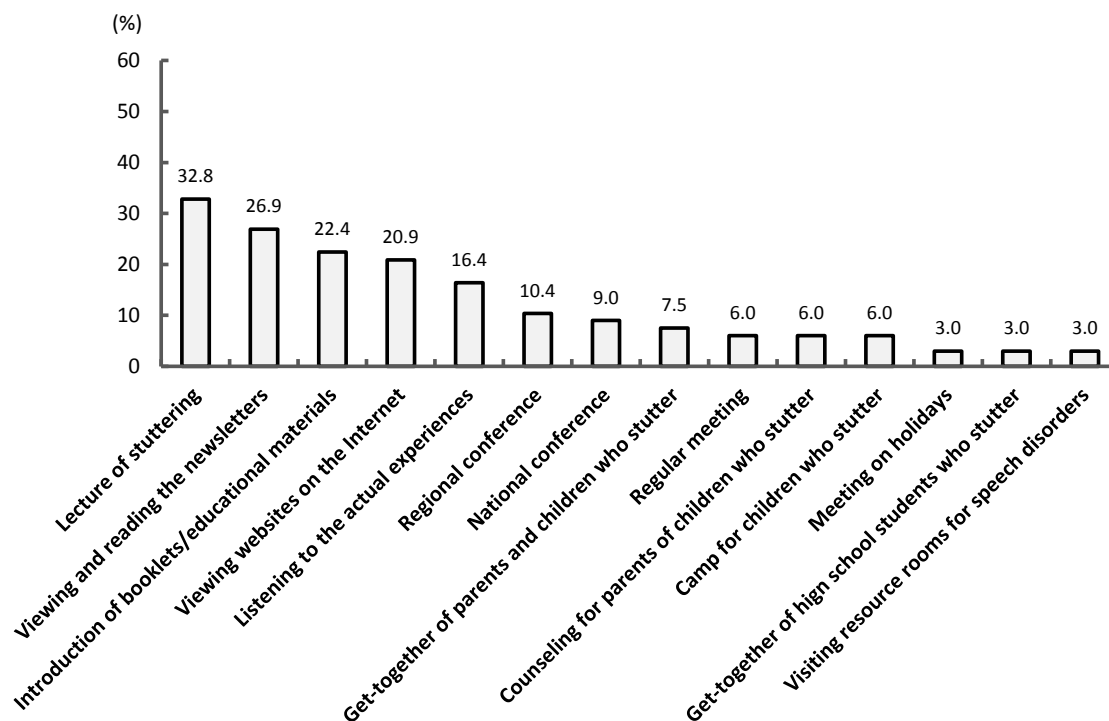


Fig.2 Status of participation of the teachers and therapists in the activities of SSHG (n=67)

With regard to responses by the presence of SSHG in the employment region, we received the responses such as “Viewing and reading the newsletters (presence 32.7%, No presence 11.1%)”.

(2) Interest of the teachers and therapists in the activities of SSHG: Response rate was high for “Lecture of stuttering (92.6%)”, “Get-together of junior high-school students and high school students who stutter (77.6%)” (Fig.3.).

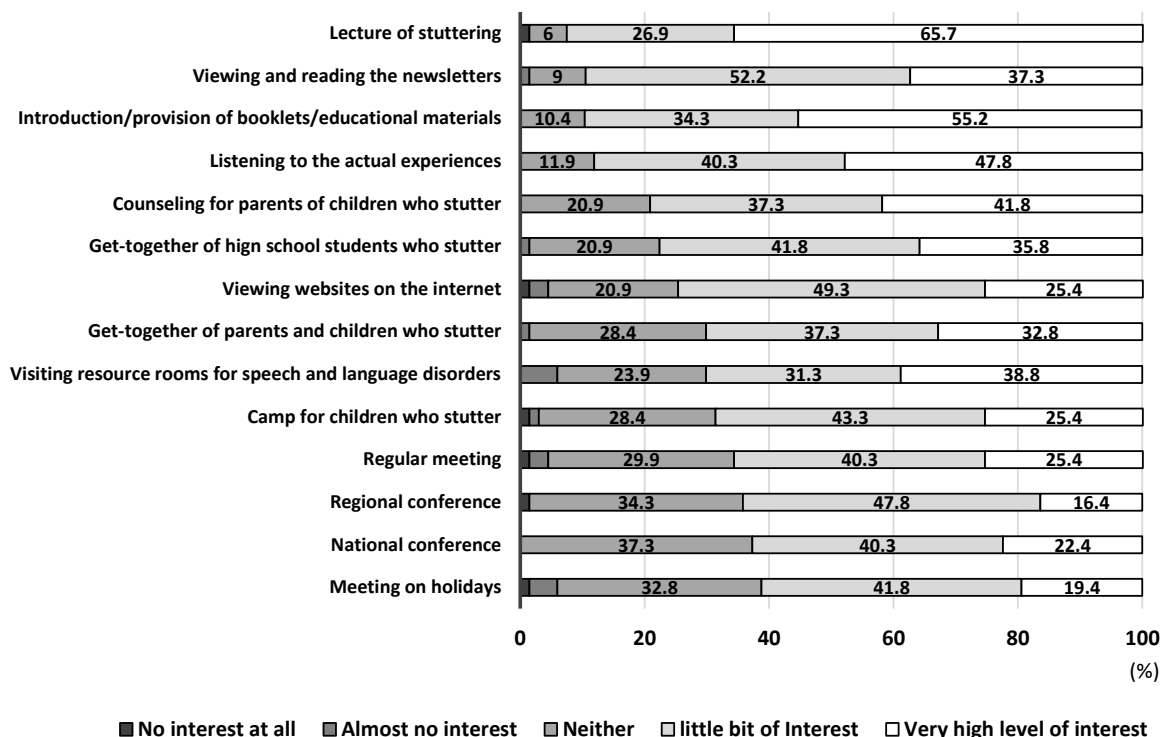


Fig.3. Interest of the teachers and therapists in the activities of SSHG (n=67)

With regard to responses by the presence of SSHG in the employment region, difference was seen in “Regular meeting (Presence 73.5%, No presence 44.5%)”. Based on these results, it may be possible to contribute to the support through mainly providing information in the locations without SSHG.

### 3. Usefulness of supporting children who stutter in the activities of SSHG and issues

Fig. 4. shows the main items that were useful in supporting children who stutter by collaborating with SSHG, and Fig. 5. shows the issues. With regard to the usefulness of support, responses selected by the persons in-charge of supporting and SSHG members were similar. Therefore, it can be inferred that way of moving further and contents were reviewed through discussion between both the parties.

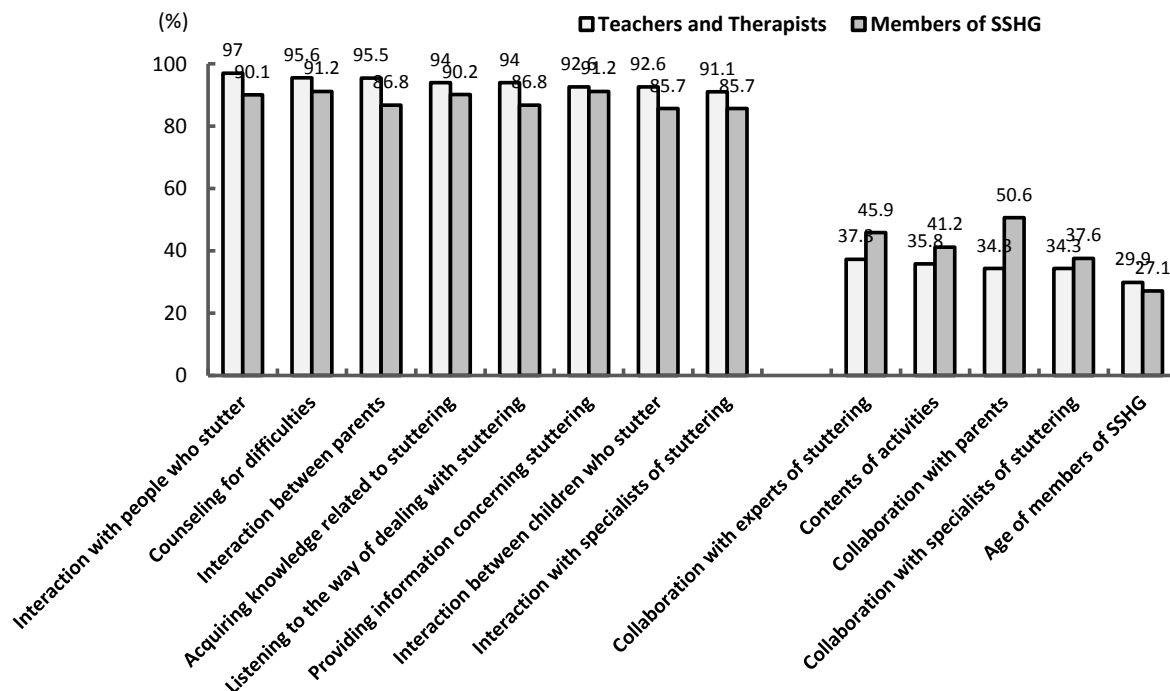


Fig.4. Usefulness of the support of children who stutter (n=67)

#### 4. Level of motivation of SSHG members for supporting children who stutter and its reasons

Responses were “There is motivation (46.2%)”, “There is a little bit of motivation (30.8%)”, “None of the above (17.6%)”, and “No (5.5%)” (Fig.5). From these results, we could infer that SSHG members have a very high motivation for supporting children who stutter.

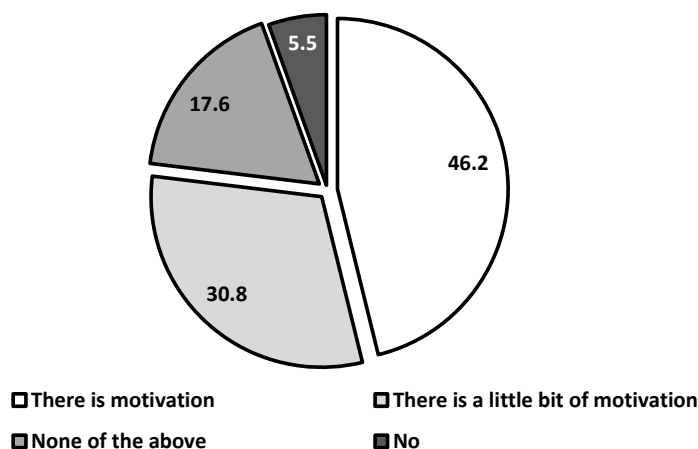


Fig.5. Level of motivation of SSHG members for supporting children who stutter (n=91)

Fig. 6. shows the main reasons for their motivation (“There is motivation” and “There is a little bit of motivation”) or lack (“None of the above” and “No”) of it for supporting the children who stutter.

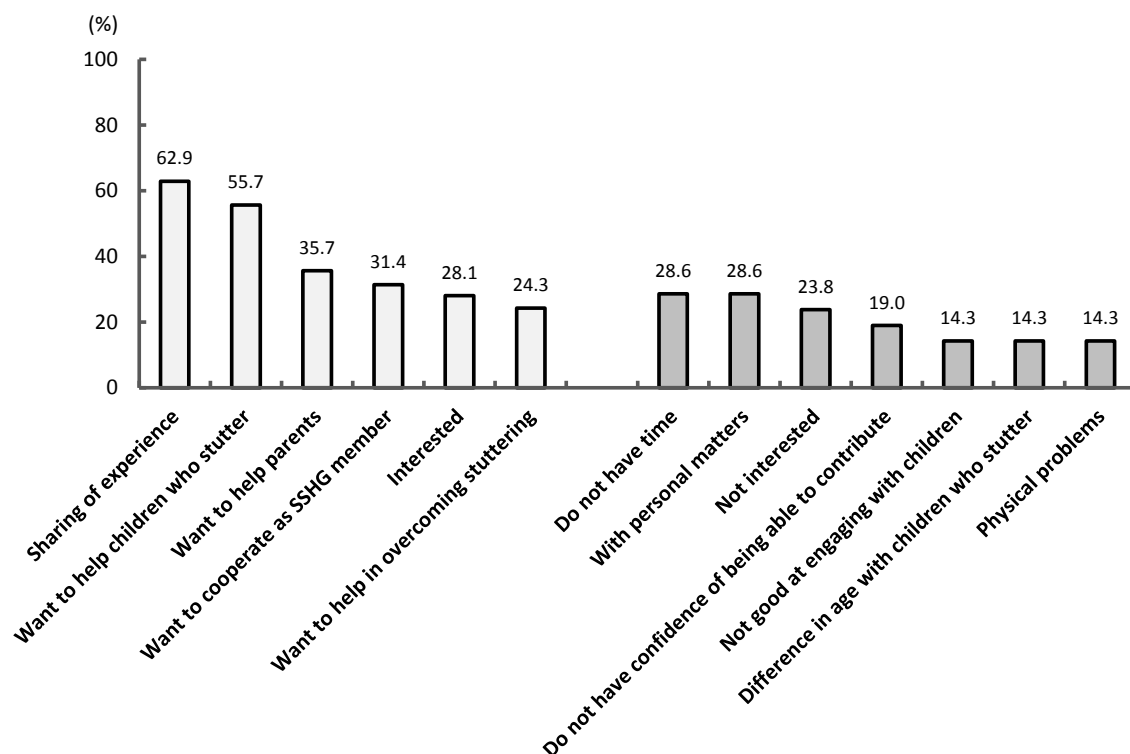


Fig.6. Motivation of SSHG members for supporting children who stutter (n=70)

Between age, gender, number of years after joining SSHG, severity of stuttering, self-acceptance of stuttering, and level of motivation for supporting children who stutter, no correlations was seen based on Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Also SSHG members' various backgrounds and experiences might be useful in support. From the standpoint of SSHG members, it can be said that participation in supporting children who stutter leads to desensitization of one's own stuttering and self-acceptance. Going forward, examination of case studies is also required.

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